GOETHE OR FAUST?
(1749-1832)

Introduction: Goethe's impact: Hegel, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche...
- Conversations with Eckermann: "The best German book"
- Faustean Man: powerful modern symbol: promethean, secular, superior (I: 54; II: 218, 223; I: 51; II: 219)

I. Crucial methodological consideration: "new perspective": life and work studied together as an organic unity and in terms of development

II. Text-analysis (1): structural, foundational

A. Vast scope of the text: (1) breadth of G's experience; (2) resultant ambiguity, complexity ('riddle'); (3) underlying vision of reality: NATURE: all-encompassing, creativity, activity...
   - Pantheism, not monotheism (Deus Sive Natura – Spinoza)
   - Deism, agnosticism, atheism, remythologization

B. Faust and Mephistopheles: bi-polarity of Man and Nature

1. Faust: creative impulse, endless experience, 'love': ceaseless striving, insatiable; creator (promethean)
2. Mephisto: negative, destructive, critical; positive role in spite of himself – anti-inertia and stagnation: necessary complement, stimulus (I: 42, 51; II: 179)
3. fundamental struggle in man and cosmos
4. no radical evil: integrate, not eliminate

C. View of Morality: what is it to be fully human? freedom?

1. Bentham: seek to maximize pleasure, minimize pain
2. Kant: duty (law): reason: human dignity, the limit of freedom
3. Faust: ceaseless striving (love): self-realization: no limit to freedom
4. Dante: natural love (a-moral) and rational love (morality)
   * Is 'faustean' morality really a-moral?

D. Preliminary conclusions about some 'riddles'

1. Why is Faust "saved"? no radical evil; “man errs so long as he strives” (I: 11)
2. Why a ‘tragedy’? inevitable ‘sacrifice’ of the innocent
3. What is the relationship between G and F?
   * Is G a ‘pure faustean’? F needs M: G = F + M
4. The case of Margaret (Gretchen): the “sinlessly sinning”
   * an exception to all of the above?
III Text-analysis (2): developmental approach: exploring Goethe's complex views of man and morality

* Three-stage evolution

A. URFAUST: Storm and Stress: romantic: 1773-75
   1. anti-Wagner: 'inert' book-knowledge
   2. insatiable appetite for 'feeling' and 'experience'
   3. ends with "Margaret (Gretchen) tragedy"

B. From URFAUST to Fragment to FAUST I: 1775-1808
   1. anti-romantic: strict classicist: noble simplicity and tranquil grandeur; lofty themes and a tireless harmony of soul: WEIMAR, 1775
   2. 1786: "fateful" trip to ITALY: discovered the classics: rebirth
   3. 1788: return to WEIMAR: strict classicist mellowing; publishes URFAUST minus "passionate" ending (I: 122-end): Fragment, 1790
   4. 1797-1806: further work on F I: Prologue in Heaven
   5. anti-Faustean: "hexenprodukt": Farewell, 1800
   6. published F I, 1808: returned ending

C. FAUST II: 1825-1832
   1. classicist: classic: classic-romantic as final position
   3. back to beginning... final break-through 1831: end of play... published 1832

D. Textual illustrations of the development in G's attitude beyond the 'Pure Faustean' (romantic)
   1. F I: 28 'scenes'; F II: 5 'Acts'
   2. heaven: beginning and end: classic symmetry, order, clarity, natural love
   3. Prologue in Heaven: "I will soon lead him into clarity"; "man errs as long as he strives"
   4. F II opening scene: healing: break with S & S
   5. Poets and the Vampire (II:23): unlimited experience satirized
   6. Homunculus-Mephisto (II: 72-76)
   7. Classical (vs. Romantic) Walpurgis Night (II: 78 ff.)
   8. Helen-scenes (II:151ff.): wedding of classic with romantic
   9. Arcadia (II:163ff.): Euphorion: the fate of pure romanticism
   10. Act V: ambiguity and irony: Lyceus' speech (16lines-II:214);
      Ironic Ending: freedom/slavery; brave new world/coffin; lowest level of heaven/not guide, model…
E. *Further light on ‘riddles’*

1. Why is F “saved”? *the classic completes the romantic*

2. Why a ‘tragedy’?
   - *tragic blindness not wickedness*
   - *appearance/reality tragic gap*
   - *But: does Faust do anything ‘heroic’? ‘risk’?*

3. Is G a *convinced ‘faustean’*?
   - *need consider the whole play*
   - G’s view of morality: *romantic vitality AND classic form, self-limitation, clarity*
     - compare with Kant: *more place for feeling, spontaneity…*
     - compare with F: *more place for reason, order, self-mastery…*

4. How G is *not F*:
   - *two types of striving*: absolute and conditional
   - *insatiability*: practically impossible, creatively wrong
   - *creativity and serenity*: not incompatible

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*Nietzsche*: "A Homer would have created no Achilles, a Goethe no Faust, had Homer been an Achilles or Goethe a Faust." *(Genealogy* III, sec 4)

*Faust's revenge*: The independent life of the poetic creation